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ABSTRACT

Noting that there is a strong relationship between homework and academic achievement, this paper presents suggestions that can help with the homework process. The paper offers a list of 12 basic things parents can do to provide the needed support, a list of 4 things parents should do, and a list of 5 things parents should not do concerning their children's homework. The paper also presents a list of 10 things teachers should do, and a list of 10 things teachers should not do concerning homework. The paper concludes with a list of six helpful homework hints for harried parents and the assurance that homework, if judiciously assigned, can result in better grades and better reading skills and comprehension. (RS)

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Homework : Royal Road to Reading Well ?

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Running head: homework

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Every day, millions of school aged children arrive home from school. Some bring massive amounts of homework with them, others bring no homework at all. Some homework is simply busy work, other homework is designed to reinforce and review what was learned in school. Some homework involves re-reading the textbook, other homework assignments involve a trek to the public library.

Some children get homework assignments but do not do these asssignments. Other children begin their homework, but never seem to finish these homework tasks. Some teachers assign no homework at all, since they have to coach track, basketball, football, soccer, tennis, golf or cross country. There are other teachers who assign minimal homework as they are the cheerleading sponsor, are responsible for the yearbook, the school newspaper, the twirling or baton squad or some other after school activity.

Basically, there is a very strong relationship between homework and academic achievement. Children who do well in school spend a good deal of time on their homework and read a good deal while doing their homework.

Parents can help with the homework process and indirectly assist the child in reading well. The following suggestions may be helpful.

Parents can :

1) Ensure that their students has a specific place to do their homework each and every night. Obviously, a desk in their room is ideal, but a specific part of the kitchen or dining room ensures that the child has a work space of his or her own.

2) Make sure that the child has the necessary supplies- pens, pencils, paper, dictionary, stapler (depending upon the child's age) and other materials such as a pencil sharpener etc.

3) Ensure that the lighting is adequate and that the child will not be disturbed by the television, dishwasher or whatever. If the child is doing their homework, the television should be off. Homework takes prescedence over " The Flintstones ".

4) Schedule a specific time for the child to do his or her homework. This time can be before dinner, after dinner, but preferably before television.

5) Communicate with teachers to make sure that the child is being assigned homework. Some children " forget " their assignments, some do it on the bus, and others do it in the library, cafeteria or bathroom.

6) Develop an interest in what their child is learning about in school.

7) Attempt to procure a tutor if a child is having difficulty with a specific subject.

8) Teach children some basics of good study habits- using a book mark would be one example. Taking notes about important points would be another.

9) Establish rules about how much time should be spent on homework as the child grows from the first grade to the eighth grade. In high school, more time should be required as the child prepares for college.

10) Take the phone off the hook if that is a major problem in your home. Or purchase and answering machine to take messages.

11) If a child continues to have problems with homework, consult with the teacher. If improvement is not forthcoming request that the school give intellectual and academic achievement tests or other specialized tests to determine if there is some kind of learning disability or visual or auditory problem.

12) Link homework with independent reading. If you child has to do a report on outer space and the planets, he or she can read books about this topic. Parents need to encourage their children to further investigate their interests.

Parents should :

1) Try not to yell or scream at their children when they are having difficulty in math. The child is perhaps as frustrated and exasperated as the parent. A local college student may be able to serve as a tutor, or perhaps the math teacher can meet with the parents.

2) Help the child allocate his or her time for major projects or science experiements. Parents should also help the child to organize their weekend time for monday morning assignments.

3) Encourage the child to read ahead so they are prepared for the next day's work. Even if they have no homework, they can still review what they have learned or what they may be tested on in the future.

4) Help the child by taking them to the library, and orienting them to the library, the card catalog and the computer (if there is one) and how to use it.

Parents should NOT :

1) Do the homework for the child or do the science projecrt for the child.

2) Accept the child's statement that " they have no homework " It is good to double check with the teachers or other parents.

3) Allow children to wait until Sunday night at 10:00 p.m. to begin assignments that are due Monday morning. If the child stays up until 12:30 a.m. doing their homework, they will not have gotten an adequae amount of sleep for the next day. There is much research that indicates that children (and adults !) in America are not getting enough sleep and that this contributes to academic as well as vocational difficulties. Parents should not allow bad habits of procrastination to begin.

4) Allow sports to inordinately interfere with homework.

Certainly students will be tired when they return from track, football, soccer and or basketball. However if they fall behind in certain subjects (particularly math) it is often very difficult to "catch up " . Some students may do very well in sports in high school, but lose the bigger game of college and life.

5) Allow sloppy, messy, hurried work.

TEACHERS SHOULD :

1) ASSIGN AN APPROPRIATE AMOUNT OF HOMEWORK GIVEN THE CHILD'S AGE AND ABILITY LEVEL.

2) USE HOMEWORK TO REVIEW AND TO REINFORCE PREVIOUSLY LEARNED MATERIAL.

3) USE HOMEWORK TO HELP DEVELOP READING SKILLS AND CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS.

4) USE HOMEWORK TO ENHANCE WRITING SKILLS.

5) HELP STUDENTS MASTER MATERIAL.

6) MAKE SURE THAT ALL ASSIGNMENTS ARE ON THE CHILD'S INDEPENDENT LEVEL. IF THE CHILD WAS UNABLE TO COMPLETE THE ASSIGNMENT IN CLASS, THEY WILL PROBABLY NOT BE ABLE TO COMPLETE IT AT HOME.

7) MAKE SURE THAT HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS ARE NOT FRUSTRATING- DIRECTIONS SHOULD BE CLEAR, EXAMPLES SHOULD BE GIVEN AND THE UNDERSTANDING OF DIRECTIONS SHOULD BE CHECKED IN CLASS

8) MAKE SURE THAT ASSIGNMENTS ARE RELEVANT AND MEANINGFUL AND RELATE TO WHAT THE CHILD IS LEARNING IN SCHOOL.

9) PREPARE THE CHILD FOR FUTURE FEEDBACK AND INDICATE HOW MANY POINTS WILL BE GIVEN FOR THEIR WORK.

10) ASK STUDENTS FOR INPUT AS TO THE TYPE OF HOMEWORK THAT THEY MAY WANT TO ENGAGE IN- ESSAYS, FILL IN THE BLANKS, MULTIPLE CHOICE; WHEN IT SHOULD BE DUE; CRITERIA FOR GRADING ETC.

TEACHERS SHOULD NOT:

1) ASSIGN HOMEWORK AS PUNISHMENT

2) ASSIGN REPITITIOUS AND BORING HOMEWORK (EG BUSY WORK) THIS WILL " TURN THE CHILD OFF " TO LEARNING.

3) ASSIGN HOMEWORK THAT WILL NOT BE CHECKED OR GRADED. STUDENTS WILL OBVIOUSLY NOT DO HOMEWORK IF THEY DISCERN THAT TEACHERS SIMPLY THROW THE HOMEWORK IN THE TRASH.

4) SHOULD NOT SIMPLY BE LOWER LEVEL LEARNING, BUT SHOULD ATTEMPT TO INCLUDE APPLICATION, ANALYSIS, SYNTHESIS AND EVALUATION .

5) GIVE MORE HOMEWORK THAN THEY WOULD BE WILLING TO DO OR PROVIDE FEEDBACK FOR.

6) ALWAYS USED THE " CANNED " HOMEWORK PROVIDED BY SOME BASAL READERS AND TEXTBOOKS. THESE MAY HAVE LITTLE TO DO WITH WHAT WAS LEARNED IN CLASS.

7) ASSIGN HOMEWORK UNLESS INSTRUCTION HAS BEEN PROVIDED.

8) EXPECT HOMEOWRK WHEN THE CHILD HAS BEEN ABSENT AND HAS NOT RECEIVED INSTRUCTION.

9) ALWAYS ASSIGN UNFINISHED CLASSWORK AS HOMEWORK.

10) FEEL OBLIGATED TO ASSIGN HOMEWORK IF THERE IS NO GOOD REASON TO DO SO.

Bodie (1990) has offered " six helpful homework hints for harried parents. These are :

1) Let your child choose a regular time for study, and agree on a specific set of homework guidelines.

2) Establish a " homework headquarters " (away from the television) with a good light and a place for paper, pencils and a dictionary.

3) Respect your child's privacy while he or she is working and suggest friends be informed of a regular studyt time to avoid interruptions.

4) Plan ahead when something special is scheduled during homework time.

5) Teach young students to use " corners of time " such as waiting for the dentist or riding in a car.

6) Let your child take the consequences of not having homework done. (p.13)

Summary and Conclusions

This paper has summarily reviewed homework, the assigning of homework and the importance of daily homework. If judiciously assigned, hoework can have many beneficial effects including better grades and better reading skills and comprehension .

Bodie, B. (1990) Homework Hassle. Guideposts pp. 10-13